

Growers News for the Week of September 25, 2017

Student orientation to the gardens was scheduled for the whole fifth grade this past Thursday. Mrs. Opperman gave an overview of the program to the students with a Power Point presentation. This presentation shows the students what will be expected from them and emphasizes the main features of the gardens. Safety is also emphasized as students will use adult tools.

After the presentation, Mrs. Krenek's morning class was to go out for a tour of the gardens. Unfortunately rain changed our plans. They will now catch up in two weeks. We were, however, able to squeeze in the afternoon class tour. Students are so excited to start their gardening experience.

On Thursday we were joined by some new volunteers who will be gardening with us. We welcome Mrs. Koelzer, Mrs. Blanton, Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Kreischer to our ranks. An orientation for new gardening volunteers will be held on Tuesday, September 26, at 9:30 at the little red shed. We are expecting several more new volunteers to join us then.

It was with some sadness that we said good-bye to a long-time volunteer and vice president of the Growers, Mr. McMullen. He was affectionately known to many classes of fifth graders as Mr. Safety. He is a retired ExxonMobil retiree who brought in many grants. Health reasons have made it necessary for him to take a break from gardening. We will miss him greatly and wish him well!

The Growers spend time in the gardens other than Thursdays to keep it functioning well. Harvesting, weeding, watering and improving infrastructure is ongoing. A small group of volunteers work on Tuesdays at 9 am for an hour or two. Mrs. Martins will be joining them as a new volunteer. There is a place for volunteers on days other than Thursdays. If you enjoy fixing things or helping to keep our structures in good repair, we have a need for you as well.

Mr. Langridge has taken on the care and training of our grape vines. He did a great job pruning the old muscadine vines. They are now trained onto wires and pruned properly. He also planted some new vines in the orchard area as well as the main garden. This should invigorate the old vines and yield a good crop next year.

Since Hurricane Harvey delayed the start of school, volunteers have started planting some of the fall crops. The calendar says it is time! Radishes, lettuce, carrots, and beets were planted from seed. These are already up and growing. Long beans were planted in late summer and are blooming. We anticipate a good yield from these beans. Transplants of various cole crops have been purchased and bumped up into larger containers. These will be transplanted into the ground soon.

The OFE Growers are an all volunteer non-profit organization created specifically to fund and administer the gardens and nature programs at the school. Mrs. Krenek is our president. She envisioned this "hands-on" approach to learning science and math over 15 years ago. If you have questions or comments on the programs of the Growers, do talk with her or send her an e-mail at: deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net. You can also learn about the OFE Growers by going to their web site at: www.ofegrowers.org.

We do need parental help with the gardening program. We would love to have you join us on Thursdays if you have time. The more volunteers we have, the more "one on one" time can be spent with each student. No experience is necessary. If you are available to help us on Thursdays, please contact hoppergo@aol.com. Since many of us are grandparents, we would love to have grandparents join us. We enjoyed meeting a number of 5th grade grandparents last week. We were the ones in the lobby selling fig, grape, and other preserves. This is our one fund raiser for the year. Our volunteers can take the produce from the summer gardens and sell the preserves. We still have a good supply and we hope that you will help us by purchasing these yummy products.

Soon we will be sending produce home with the 5th grade gardeners. Save your plastic grocery shopping bags for us. Send them in to their 5th grade teacher. What a deal - you furnish the bags and we send home produce for you to enjoy!